AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for improving the intelligibility of speech output by a speech synthesizer, comprising the steps of:

determining if uncommon words exist in a text; and

if it is determined that an uncommon word exists in the text, inserting a variable length pause before and after the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to offset the uncommon word from its surrounding speech, and inserting at least one variable length pause within the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to increase the duration of the uncommon word.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the determination is made by comparing the input text to common words stored in a database and determining if a word is uncommon if the word is not in the database.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein a word is determined as uncommon if the word is capitalized.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the determination is made by using a statistical language model.

5. (Original) The method of Claim 4, wherein the statistical language model compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the determination is made by using a prediction algorithm to predict when a difficult word or phrase has been encountered.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein the prediction algorithm compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) A system for improving the intelligibility of speech output by a speech synthesizer, comprising:

a rare sequence detector for determining if uncommon words exist in a text, and if it is determined that an uncommon word exists in the text, inserting a variable length pause before and after the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to offset the uncommon word from its surrounding speech, and inserting at least one variable length pause within the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to increase the duration of the uncommon word.

10. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines an that a word is an uncommon word by comparing the input text to common words stored in a database and determining if a word is uncommon if the word is not in the database.

11. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines that a word is an uncommon word if the word is capitalized.

12. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines that a word is an uncommon word by using a statistical language model.

13. (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the statistical language model compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

14. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines that a word is an uncommon word by using a prediction algorithm.

15. (Original) The system of Claim 14, wherein the prediction algorithm compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

16-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) A computer program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for determining if uncommon words exist in a text, and if it is determined that an uncommon word exists in the text, inserting a variable length pause before and after the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to offset the uncommon word from its surrounding speech, and inserting at least one variable length pause within the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to increase the duration of the uncommon word.

19. (Original) The computer program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine of Claim 18, wherein a word is determined as uncommon if the word is capitalized.

20. (Original) The computer program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine of Claim 18, wherein the determination is made by using a statistical language model.

21. (Original) The computer program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine of Claim 20, wherein the statistical language model compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

22. (Original) The computer program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine of Claim 18, wherein the determination is made by using a prediction algorithm.

23. (Original) The computer program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine of Claim 22, wherein the prediction algorithm compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

24. (Cancelled)